




## **100 years of Christmas**

The story of how Coca-Cola has shared the gift of Christmas from 1920 to 2020



Undergraduate Thesis  
**Bachelor's Degree in Communication**

January 2021

**Teresa Luque Galán**

Reader: Francisco José Pérez Valencia





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*In a year when few things have seemed normal,  
stable or reassuring, there is one thing we can rely on,  
Coca-Cola celebrating and sharing the magic of Christmas.*

the 'information' and 'communication' fields. The 'information' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'communication' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of communication production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information science' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information studies' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information research' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information practice' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information theory' field is defined as:

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The 'information technology' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information systems' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information management' field is defined as:

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The 'information policy' field is defined as:

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## Agradecimientos

En primer lugar, me gustaría reconocer a la *Universidad Loyola* y a *The Coca-Cola Company* como las dos instituciones que tanto han contribuido en mi desarrollo personal y profesional durante el año que supone el culmen de mi etapa universitaria.

Asimismo, quisiera agradecer a mis profesores su apoyo, respaldo y confianza durante todos estos años. Pilar Castro, José Antonio Muñiz, Fernando Iwasaki, Puri Alcaide, Andrés del Toro, Paula Herrero, Javi Lozano, David Varona, Juan Plaza... GRACIAS. Es muy reconfortante saber que volver a mi universidad es sinónimo de sentirme en casa, y que vosotros sois parte esencial de ella.

Formar parte de *The Coca-Cola Company* supone un sueño hecho realidad, una meta que se ha materializado y me ha hecho ser consciente de que la constancia y el talento siempre deben trabajar de la mano. Parte de este aprendizaje se lo debo a Alejandro Fuente, Marketing Manager de Europa Occidental, mi gran consejero y aliado en este camino. Gracias dupla.

Me resulta complicado expresar o tratar de materializar todo lo que he vivido durante la gestación y desarrollo de este proyecto. Desde el entusiasmo hasta la frustración. Sin embargo, sé que hubiera sido imposible crear algo tan real, humano y sincero sin el acompañamiento de mi querido Paco Pérez. Gracias compañero de viaje, esto es tan tuyo como mío.

Agradezco a Lourdes García, Filóloga Inglesa y profesora de la Universidad de Córdoba, la revisión y corrección estilística de esta investigación. Siempre me supiste transmitir el valor de aprender un nuevo idioma.

Finalmente, a los que considero mis mentores, mis padres. Gracias, por escucharme, aconsejarme y comprenderme, vosotros sois mi gran apoyo moral.

¡Muchas gracias a todos!

Teresa Luque Galán  
Córdoba, enero de 2021



## 00. Introduction

Coca-Cola is might be one of the best-known brands across the world. From the Australian outback to center Europe, from Alaska to Cape Town, there is no other brand whose presence and appeal cut across culture and religion as Coca-Cola does. Nowadays, this brand is the outcome of decades of excellent advertising campaigns in different languages, channels and media.

In this research, the catalyst behind the growth of the Coca-Cola brand is the analysis and study of the most memorable advertising Christmas campaigns across one hundred years. This thesis is a **qualitative research** that examines the marketing strategies and core creative ideas behind some of the most successful advertising campaigns of The Coca-Cola Company.

To understand the advertising campaigns carried out on Christmas over the past 100 years, the researcher focuses on how Coca-Cola has built a wealth of memories and connections at Christmas. The deep analysis of the campaigns will be preceded by **a step-by-step investigation methodology** of different aspects tightly woven to society, contemporary culture, heritage and family traditions.

The research starts with a clearly articulated **research methodology**, and then moves to look at advertising from an external point of view. So that, this research can have a global perspective about how Christmas is celebrated in every continent.

The **detailed examination** about the story between Coca-Cola and Christmas is accomplished with a **visual timeline** that goes through the most important festive campaigns and analyses the socio-cultural events running on every decade.





## **01. The Coca-Cola Company in the World**

### **1.1. Globalization and Heritage**

Coca-Cola is one of the most recognizable brands in the world. According to the Forbes' annual list (2020), Coca-Cola is located as the first non-technological most valuable brand company in the world.

The Coca-Cola Company has continued to gain momentum and growth in recent years by capitalizing on the rapidly expanding global beverage industry. With its push for an increased global market share, Coca-Cola now operates in over 200 countries with over 500 brands across different beverage categories. The company offers a variety of drinks including still and sparkling water, milk, fruit juices, organic and plant-based drinks, teas, and coffees (The Coca-Cola Company, 2020).

Despite its tremendous financial and marketing achievements, the road to success has not always been an easy one for The Coca-Cola Company. Some countries have banned or heavily restricted the sale of their products, claiming that some of Coke's staple soft drinks are "threatening public health" and "encouraging obesity". Additionally, the beverage industry has witnessed a flood of new competitors introducing sparkling alternatives (The Saylor Foundation, 2012). The Coca-Cola Company has responded by introducing new brands such as Sprite, Fanta, Minute Maid, Powerade, Aquarius...

Considering the obstacles that The Coca-Cola Company has overcome, it has always remained true to its commitment: "Refresh the world. Make a difference" and company vision: "To craft the brands and choice of drinks that people love, to refresh them in body & spirit – done in ways that create a more sustainable business and better-shared future that makes a difference in people's lives, communities, and our planet" (The Coca-Cola Company, 2020).

The understanding of this company is not genuine if it is not relied on its history. Coca-Cola's journey to globalization started in 1889 along with John Pemberton, an American pharmacist when the formula and brand

were sold for \$2,300 to Asa Griggs Candler, who incorporated The Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta in 1892.

During the early 1900s, The Coca-Cola Company began a modest expansion into the global market. Bottling plants were initially built in Cuba and Panama as the US military expanded into the region. Additional bottling plants were early built in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. By 1926, The Coca-Cola Company had established foreign relationships and bottling plants located around the world supported by its Centre of Global Operations. World War II and the Cold War marked the signature period in which Coca-Cola was able to establish itself as a truly global corporation known for its efficiency and worldwide capabilities. The company continued to expand throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, arguably becoming one of the world's most iconic brands, according to the Sailor Foundation research (2012).

## **1.2. Iconicity and Brand Recognition**

The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) provided a comprehensive description of what advertising is concerning the focus of this research. The AANA (2014) describes advertising as:

*“Advertising means any material which is published or broadcast using any medium or any activity which is undertaken by, or on behalf of an advertiser, and over which the advertiser has a reasonable degree of control, and that draws the attention of the public in a manner calculated to promote or oppose directly or indirectly a product, services, person, organization or line of conduct”.*

The Coca-Cola Company is an expression of how to use advertising effectively through insights and valuable ideas. Its marketing strategies, including memorable advertising slogans, catchy jingles, and sporting event sponsorships, have played a significant role in winning over the hearts and minds of global consumers. Professor Dhirendra Mishra (2015) explained that the key strategies adopted by the company to support rapid growth and expansion across the globe have been: Global Marketing Strategies, Product Differentiation, and Technology.

**1. Global Marketing Strategy** strengthened with stunning slogans and memorable songs to impact consumers and position the product in their minds. Moreover, Coca-Cola really understands global needs, the company moulded itself to attract consumers from all the strata of

society. For instance, No Sugar Coke and Vitamin Water are available for health-conscious consumers, as well as Fanta and flavoured Coke are offered for the younger consumers.

2. **Product differentiation** has also played a key role in how adaptable the Coca-Cola product is to various market segments. Functional packaging has been used to make the products available in different sizes and forms – including glass and plastic bottles, aluminium cans, and fountain drink dispensers. Each format has been carefully developed and designed for a specific moment of the day and a targeted consumption channel.

3. **Technology** has obviously played a crucial role in establishing Coca-Cola world leader in the beverage market. Product transportation, computerization and information availability are some of the key players in the company performance.

The marketing efficiency of Coca-Cola is possible because the company took advantage of the communication role of advertising and its economic status. This introductory examination of advertising will not be completed without looking at how the four identified roles of advertising (marketing, communication, economic and socio-cultural role) are related to the brand.

Fetisova (2015) explains that advertising plays a marketing role when it presents the required products or ideas to the target market. This is taken into consideration by Coca-Cola advertising campaigns through the identification of the specific target market interested in the products. The company understands the effectiveness of the marketing mix when reaching the right target audience through the clever presentation of its brand and the right communication tools.

Moriarty et al. (2015) stated that advertising communication “informs consumers and transforms a product by creating an image that goes beyond straightforward facts” (p.6). In the worldwide market, there are millions of different brands, but none is recognized in the same way as Coca-Cola.

A classic example could be Coca-Cola brand placement as Santa Claus’ drink at Christmas. Nowadays, the Christmas season is intrinsically associated with Coca-Cola advertising campaigns to inspire consumers across the world. Indeed, the company transformed its brand, from an ordinary soft drink to a recognized and distinctive brand linked to relevant celebrations such as Christmas.

Generally, corporate branding is composed by name, term, design, symbol, and any other features that identify company's product as distinct from other companies (Pride & Ferrell, 2013 p.283). For instance, the Coca-Cola brand includes the logo of the company and the bright red colour associated with its product's label.

### **1.3. Most memorable Marketing Strategies**

As previously mentioned, Coca-Cola's Global Marketing Strategies played a significant role in successfully company globalization. Throughout the years, the slogans used in advertising for Coca-Cola have reflected not only the brand but the times. According to Masud, M. (2016), some of their best advertising slogans have been in existence since the company's inception.

➤ ***“Delicious and Refreshing” (1886)***

The first and longest-running slogan that initially appeared in 1886. The company remained loyal to this slogan until the 1920s. It was then when the Coca-Cola came up with two more iconic slogans.

➤ ***“The Great National Temperance Beverage” (1906)***

It reflects a time when the society in the United States was veering away from alcoholic beverages, and Coca-Cola was offered as a nice alternative.

➤ ***“Thirst Knows No Season” (1922)***

It was created in 1922 and remained popular till 1929 when they came up with the following tagline.

➤ ***“The Pause That Refreshes” (1929)***

This tagline caught up with the masses and remained the main tagline for around three more decades. According to Batchelor and Coombs (2014) and considering the historical period of this advertisement, “refreshment” from the Depression is an important component, but “pause” tends to make one wonder how this advertisement fits the happening of the day.

➤ ***“Things Go Better With Coke” (1950)***

The 1950s was a revolutionary decade for advertising. The focus shifted from print to television. Companies were coming up with slogans that sounded well as jingles. Coca-Cola hired McCann Erickson as its branding partner. We saw several jingles throughout the 50s and 60s.

➤ ***“It’s the Real Thing” (1971)***

It was Coke’s first major campaign – produced in 1971 by Billy Davis. The Saylor Foundation (2012) argued that the commercial featuring this song portrayed a world of hope and love produced by a group of multicultural teenagers on top of a hill. This commercial has gone down in history as one of the most well-known commercials of all time. The “Hilltop” ad featured the song with the words *“I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke”*. Although that was not an actual slogan, it has been considered as such by the public.

➤ ***“Coke Is It” (1980)***

The company kept coming up with catchy slogans throughout the 80s. First, it was *“Have a Coke and a Smile”* and then they created the popular *“Coke Is It”*. Henceforth, Coca-Cola was focusing its attention on the younger audience. *“Coke Is It”* reflected the cultural shift among American Youth.

➤ ***“Always Coca-Cola” (1990)***

The 1990s was a decade of change for the company. From the bottle to branding, everything changed. The company hired another marketing agency who helped them build multiple campaigns around the iconic *“Always Coca-Cola”* slogan.

➤ ***“Open Happiness” (2009)***

It is essentially the most popular Coca-Cola slogan of our time. When it was introduced, it was thought that it would never be changed again. The advertising campaign was focused on the brand’s mission, vision, and values. Most of the campaigns were built around the subject of peace, tolerance, inclusion, diversity, and coexistence.

As mentioned by Masud, M. (2016), with this slogan, Coca-Cola rebranded itself into a company that truly cares about things that matter – about humanity and the challenges it faces. It became more

than just a soda company and set an example for other brands to follow.

➤ ***“Taste the Feeling” (2016)***

This slogan reinforced the company’s commitment. The Coca-Cola Company wanted to revert it into something highly focused on simple pleasures. It signifies how there is a Coca-Cola for everyone – no matter their taste, lifestyle or dietary preferences. This campaign covers all the product variants including Coca-Cola Zero and Coca-Cola Light.

➤ ***“Open like Never Before” (2020)***

This post-pandemic campaign aims to transmit a clear message: be open, like never before. The campaign encourages people to embrace the change and to appreciate better what they might have taken for granted previously. “Open Like Never Before” came after a seven-month pause in commercial advertising, the longest ever for Coca-Cola. During this time, its advertising resources were donated to support charity partners (The Drum, 2020).

## 02. The Christmas Season: Origin and Meaning

### 2.1. Unwrapping Christmas

World-renowned Christmas celebrations are thought to have been dying out until the 19th century when a group of writers began to revive interest through sentimental Christmas tales tying the holiday to Victorian celebrations at home with family and children (Golby and Purdue, 1986). The most influential of these writers were Charles Dickens, from England, and Washington Irving, from the U.S. "*A Christmas Carol*" (Dickens, 1843) was and remains the most influential of these tales (Eldred, 2008).

Without a shadow of a doubt, Christmas has reemerged as an amalgam of European celebrations. It is appropriate to mention that global Christmas traditions and iconography include the original German Christmas tree, the British Christmas card, and the Dutch Christmas cookies. Even though Santa Claus draws on earlier European influences - for example, the reindeer and sleigh are from Scandinavia, while the pipe and chimney are from Holland - the jolly and red-suited man is distinctly an American creation (Belk, 1987).

According to Golby and Purdue (1986), certain of our current Christmas traditions such as Christmas celebration, including the emphasis on family, card and gift exchange, decorated Christmas trees, shopping, Santa Claus, Christmas carols, cookies and candies, either emerged or reemerged during the Victorian period in Europe.

While first-generation European immigrants to America tended to preserve the celebrations of their home countries, adoption of U.S. Christmas traditions such as Santa Claus and exchanging gifts on December 25th rather than earlier or later in the month became a mark of acculturation in second and later generations (Belk, 1987).

Snyder (1985) found that between 1820 and 1870 there was only a small amount of Philadelphia and New York newspaper advertising for Christmas presents, and these were most commonly presented as New Year's gifts or generic "holiday gifts". Based on his analysis of popular

periodical editorial and advertising material, Waits (1978) finds that the period from 1880 to 1920 saw not only a great escalation in Christmas gift-giving but a gradual shift from handmade gifts to manufactured gifts.

Another Victorian invention that helps separate items from the world of commerce is gift wrapping. We remove all evidence of an item's commercial origin by removing the price tag, ceremonially wrapping it, creating mystery – a component of sacredness (Snyder, 1985). Based on his research on Christmas celebrations, “Christmas gifts must be wrapped before they are presented.” We then ritually exchange and unwrap these gifts in the presence of extended family in a ceremony that heightens the feeling that these are not merely utilitarian commodities but are instead “gifts of the self”.

## **2.2. Traditions, popular culture, materialism and religion: The Origin of Modern Christmas**

Materialism is construed here as the belief that having possessions is the most important source of life satisfaction (Belk, 1987). This research aims to examine the history of modern Christmas advertising in an effort to understand better its relationship with materialism. Besides, this study would examine two major alternatives to the religious metanarrative for Christmas: the Santa Claus image and the Coca-Cola Christmas campaigns over one hundred years. According to Belk (1987), these alternatives to the Christian metanarrative are then related to the historical development of American Christmas shopping and materialism.

Materialism is also linked to conspicuous consumption, whose satisfaction is sustained much more in the reaction that can be caused in others than in the usefulness of the goods or services that are acquired. Moreover, it is common to associate it also with an excessive search for status through possessions and negative feelings, such as envy, self-centeredness, possessiveness, insecurity, lack of principles and moral values (Ponchio, Aranha & Todd, 2007).

In this context, it is assumed that individuals interpret their relationship with the world in various spheres, such as social conventions and social rules. Therefore, according to Luna et al. (2017), all consumption is cultural, because it is through it that we re-produce cultures, social relationships and society itself. In addition, all forms of consumption are culturally specific, since they are continually articulated about meaningful and specific ways of life.



Modern American culture is dominated by both: the capitalistic production and materialistic consumption of goods. At no time of year is this fact more evident than during the Christmas season. Indeed, Christmas has been transformed into a festival commemorating abundance, prosperity and wealth (Otnes et al. 2004).

### **2.3. Christmas Around the World**

Based on Kelley's (2004) research, Christmas is celebrated around the world every December and January. From one country to another, Christmas is celebrated in many ways, despite this fact, its warmth and joy are equal for this season everywhere.

The following information was compiled from Cooper's Christmas Library (2000), in order to understand cultural tendencies and particularities around the Christmas season worldwide.

#### **➤ Christmas in the United States**

Due to its multicultural nature, the United States has many different traditions and celebrations around Christmas (25th December). Many customs are similar to the ones in the UK, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland and Mexico. Some of the most popular ones in the USA are Christmas Tree decorations – including the Christmas Pickle – making gingerbread men, the eggnog (seasonal drink), sending out Christmas Cards, singing Carols...

People in America really love to decorate the outsides of their houses with lights and even statues of Santa Claus, Snowmen and Reindeers. Towns and cities often decorate the streets with lights to celebrate it. Perhaps the most famous Christmas street lights in the USA are at the Rockefeller Centre in New York where there is a huge Christmas Tree with a public ice skating rink in front of it at Christmas and the New Year.

### ➤ **Christmas in Europe**

Christmas Tree's tradition is also extended through Europe, decorating the tree is usually a family occasion, with everyone helping and taking care. Christmas Trees were first popularised in the UK by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband. Prince Albert was German and thought that it would be good to use one of his ways of celebrating Christmas in England.

Most families often celebrate Christmas together and eat their main meal on Christmas Eve before the Catholic service (24th December for most of the Christian countries). The traditional meal for Western European families is normally roast turkey and vegetables or ham with cranberry sauce. Traditionally, in some countries, brussels sprouts are the most widely consumed vegetables. Families from Eastern European origins favour turkey with trimmings, keilbasi (a Polish sausage), cabbage dishes, and soups. Conversely, Italian families prefer lasagne.

As it happens in other places, children write letters to Santa listing their requests, but sometimes instead of putting them in the post, the letters are tossed into the fireplace. Also, Nativity Plays, Advent Calendars and Carol Services are very popular at Christmas time.

New Year's Eve is a special day. In Spain, for example, it is celebrated eating 12 grapes with the 12 strokes of the clock at Midnight. Furthermore, skiing on New Year's Day is also popular. Apart from Christmas, Epiphany is celebrated on 6th January. Children have some presents on Christmas Day, but most of them are given on Epiphany.

### ➤ **Christmas in Africa**

Christmas is a quite big celebration in some countries such as Angola and South Africa - over 50% of the population are Catholic. So, there are Midnight Mass services on Christmas Eve and during Advent. Africans often save up throughout the year so they can afford some special food for the big Christmas meal.

Because South Africa is in the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas comes in summer. The schools are closed for the Christmas holidays and carols by Candlelight services are also popular on Christmas Eve. South Africa also has several other UK Christmas traditions, because of its history with the UK.

It is worth noting that in Egypt and Ethiopia, Christmas Day is not celebrated on the 25th December but on the 7th January (like in Russia

and Serbia). Most of the population belongs to the Coptic Orthodox Church and they have a special fast where they basically eat a vegan diet (from 25th November to 6th January) - this is called 'The Holy Nativity Fast'.

### ➤ **Christmas in Latin America**

Many Latin Christmas traditions come from Europe and the USA and are set-up in churches and homes all through December. Most people, especially Catholics, will go to a Midnight Mass service which normally finishes about 1.00 am - after the Midnight Mass Service, there are often big fireworks displayed in large towns. On Christmas day, people might go to church again, but this time the services are often in the afternoon.

Favourite Christmas food in Latin America includes pork, roast turkey, pork and chillies topped with greens, ham, salads and fresh and dried fruits. For dessert *buñuelos* are very popular, they are fried pastries sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon or hot sugar syrup.

In Mexico, for instance, Christmas is celebrated from December 12th to January 6th. From December 16th to Christmas Eve, children often perform the 'Posada' processions (inn or lodging). There are nine Posadas to celebrate the part of the Christmas story where Joseph and Mary looked for somewhere to stay. Each day, a different house holds the Posada night. On Christmas Eve, the last Posada takes place, and a baby Jesus is put into the manger and then families go to a midnight church service. After the church service, there are more fireworks to celebrate the start of Christmas.

The most played game at Posada parties is a 'piñata'. It is decorated clay filled with sweets. To play this game, children are blind-folded and take it in turns to hit the 'piñata' with a stick until it splits open and the sweets pour out.

### ➤ **Christmas in China**

In China, only about one percent of people are Christians, so most people only know a few things about Christmas. Because of this, Christmas is only often celebrated in major cities, where there are Christmas Trees, lights and other decorations on the streets and in department stores. Santa Claus is called 'Shen Dan Lao Ren' and has grottos in shops like in Europe and America.

More and more young people are celebrating Christmas in cities where Christmas parties are becoming popular and it is also a time where young couples will be gifts for each other, a bit like Valentine's day.

A tradition that is becoming popular, on Christmas Eve, is giving apples. Many stores have apples wrapped up in coloured paper for sale. Besides, some people go Carol singing, although not many people understand them or know about the Christmas Story.

### ➤ **Christmas in Japan**

Christmas has only been widely celebrated in Japan for the last few decades. It is still not seen as a religious holiday or celebration as there are not many Christians in Japan. Christmas is not a national holiday in Japan, however, schools are closed on Christmas Day. Now, several customs coming from the USA, such as sending and receiving Christmas cards and presents are popular.

In Japan, Christmas is known as more of a time to spread happiness rather than a religious celebration. Christmas Eve is more celebrated than Christmas Day, and fried chicken is often eaten on Christmas day – so it is the busiest time of year for restaurants such as KFC which even creates advertising campaigns ('Kentucky for Christmas!').

Another popular activity at Christmas in Japan, especially in Tokyo, is visiting Tokyo Disneyland to see all the decorations and the parades. The Christmas 'season' at Tokyo Disneyland is from the 2nd week in November until Christmas Day. On December 26th, all the Christmas decorations are gone, ready for the New Year celebrations to start.

New Year is a very big celebration in Japan, it is more like a traditional Western Christmas. The New Year is the period where families get together, have a special meal, pray, and send greetings cards. This occasion is celebrated over five days from December 31st to January 4th and it is a very busy time.

### ➤ **Christmas in the Arabic countries**

Christians make up a very small part of the population, despite that, Christian festivals, like Christmas and Easter, are celebrated with lots of enthusiasm. Before and during Advent, spiritual seminars take place to help people to prepare for Christmas.

In the big Christian areas, each house is decorated and has a star on the roof. The streets are also decorated and lit. The crib and Christmas

tree are also important decorations. On Christmas Day, Christians go to church for celebrations and wear their best, colourful clothes. They can stay in the church courtyard for hours, enjoying various food from different stalls. The evening is usually celebrated with immediate family or relatives where special food is enjoyed. Adults often visit their parents.

It should be noted that although the Christmas story took place in Israel, Christmas is not a public holiday unless the 25th of December is at the weekend. In major cities, such as Jerusalem, it is unlikely to see many (or any) signs of Christmas, unless you specifically go to 'tourist' areas or areas with churches in them.

The largest Christian population is in Nazareth (the town where Jesus grew up). Nazareth has lots of Christmas lights on the streets and outdoor markets to celebrate Christmas. There is a Christmas Eve parade which ends at the Church of the Annunciation. Then there is a big firework display and a Midnight Mass Service.

Some Arabs fast in the week before Christmas. The Christmas Eve meal often includes dishes such as rice, fish, nevik (green chard and chickpeas) and yoghurt/wheat soup; desserts include dried fruits and nuts. This lighter menu is designed to ease the stomach off the week-long fast and prepare it for the larger Christmas Day dinner.

For example, in Armenia, Santa Claus traditionally comes on New Year's Eve (December 31st) because Christmas Day itself is thought of as more of a religious holiday.

## **2.4. The evolution of Santa Claus: Modern Myths and Cultural Influence**

As per Wernecke (1959) mentioned on "*Christmas Customs Around The World*", since Santa Claus is believed by many as the central person in the observance of Christmas, it will be well to sketch at some length the background from which the modern Santa Claus has emerged.

Although currently Santa Claus is taken to be a myth, there was a real Saint Nicholas – an early Christian bishop well-known because of his love for and relationship to children, as for his generosity. Many chapels have been dedicated to his memory, Russia took him as its patron, as also did Greece (Wernecke, 1959).

According to Wernecke (1959), the traditional appearance of Saint Nicholas in Europe is that of a bearded saint riding on a white horse and carrying a basket of gifts for the good children and a bunch of rods for the naughty ones. The transformation of the name (Latin originally, Sanctus Nicolaous; the German, Sankt Nikolaus; the Dutch, Sinter Klass) into Santa Claus is readily understandable. It is more difficult to see how a staid saint of long ago should become the chubby, jolly who too largely rules the Christmas season.

A few facts that might clarify the evolution of Santa Claus over time should be considered. When the Dutch settled New Amsterdam, now New York, they brought along with them traditions of Saint Nicholas – even naming their first Protestant church. At the beginning of the nineteenth century (1809), through the merging of the English influence on the forms of Christmas, Washington Irving published his satirical *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, and he reimagined St. Nicholas as a pipe-smoking Dutch immigrant with an elvish demeanour. Americanized legends of St. Nicholas grew from Irving's stories, eventually morphed through the poetry of Clement Clarke Moore (1822 - *A Visit from St. Nicholas*) and the drawings of Thomas Nast (well-known cartoonist of *Harper's Illustrated Weekly* in 1863) into the American version of Santa Claus (Wernecke, 1959).



Illustration 1: Santa Claus distributes gifts to Union troops in Nast's first Santa Claus cartoon (1863).



Illustration 2: artwork by Thomas Nast (1881), who along with Clement Clarke Moore's poem helped to create the modern image of Santa Claus.

Throughout history, the Santa Claus myth has been examined in detail, his image is directly associated with a date and stands out as an emblematic figure in children's imagination (Luna et al. 2017). Belk (1987), in the same sense, emphasizes that Santa Claus can be considered a god of materialism and hedonism in modern consumer culture. Nowadays, Santa Claus is a "central figure of secular Christmas, which represents a total distance from religion;" many people believe that Christmas only survives because he represents a motive for those who do not celebrate the date as a religious feast.

"Whether Santa Claus is or not considered a sacred or secular figure, the fact is that he has been described as the most famous icon in the world – and his physical presence, jolly, with a red suit, white beard and pleasantly plump, is often the centre of attention and part of children's imagination up to a certain age" (Belk, 1987). It also usually inspires countless advertisements – emphasising the clear predominance of Coca-Cola's seasonal commercials.

## **2.5. Santa Claus and Christmas in the light of Coca-Cola**

The Coca-Cola Company began its Christmas advertising in the 1920s to increase sales during the slower winter months. Several different images of Santa were used, but none proved to be popular with consumers until 1931. That year, Archie Lee, an advertising executive for Coca-Cola, commissioned illustrator Haddon Sundblom to paint a Santa that was both: wholesome and realistic.

Sundblom looked to the Clement Moore poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" and his Scandinavian heritage to create the big, red, jolly vision of Santa that the Company used for more than 30 years. The Company commissioned Sundblom to paint Santa for the last time in 1964, but by then, the popular image of Santa was the Coca-Cola Santa Claus.

As mentioned, Haddon Sundblom, Swedish artist, early in his career as an illustrator, became the preeminent commercial artist of Santa Claus from his first illustration for Coca-Cola in 1931, and it was this connection to Santa that allowed his considerable talents to become a tradition for the company and the nation (Batchelor and Coombs, 2014).

Batchelor and Coombs (2014) stated that Sundblom's co-worker Marshall Lane explained the Santa process used by Coca-Cola to provide

billboards, as well as the advertisements for magazines and point-of-sales items. The preparations for the next year's Santa began within weeks of the end of the previous holiday season. One painting had to be completed by early spring for preliminary discussions by the creative directors of the Coca-Cola account – nowadays, the company follows a similar process, implementing 52 weeks of work in advance of every project's launch.

Over the decades many of the Sundblom Santas were depicted in domestic environments – by the roaring fireplace, the decorated Christmas tree, or, most favoured, by the refrigerator. Such adverts seem designed to confirm Miller's view that, while 'Christmas may be everywhere ... the only true Christmas is within one's own home' (Miller, D. 1993, p. 30). Which implies the acceptance of models of domestic consumption: that the fridge was an essential item of American everyday life (even in midwinter) was normalised. This could have curious repercussions. In France, for example, communist-led anti-Americanism attacked the fridge as a symptom of Americans' excessive and redundant consumption (Mckay, G. 2008).

From 1906 until 1956, the D'Arcy agency handled advertising for The Coca-Cola Company and developed underlying concepts so continuity remained between one year and another. Sundblom's last two Santas were completed for the company in 1964. Last few years, Sundblom created Santa styled that satisfied the corporate goals and objectives of the company but did not satisfy his exacting standards. Society was changing and Sundblom's field was changing and shrinking terribly due to the shift to television advertising and the use of photography in print media, reducing the need for quality illustrations (Batchelor and Coombs, 2014).

This does not mean that The Coca-Cola Company ceased to be connected specifically to the Christmas season, what is more, the advertising style followed the trends of the time away from illustration and more towards television and networked media.

## **2.6 Santa Claus and the iconic Coca-Cola's brand image**

Sundblom's paintings, made accessible through Coca-Cola advertising, have indeed helped shape American's visual images of Santa Claus and have also helped reinforce the connection of Santa to contemporary Christmas celebrations (Belk 1987, p. 320).



Santa paired with the Coca-Cola product did not require an editorial copy in the ad, allowing for a level of simplicity that is seldom seen in ads of the period. Santa already had a solid reputation, and so did the brand. In line with Batchelor and Coombs (2014), Santa provided the heartrending connection that worked remarkably well during the holiday season. The addition of the Coca-Cola brand seemed less of an attempt at advertising because the star of the advertisement was Santa Claus.

Sundblom's depictions of Santa were born from his tremendous talent as an artist, but also some direction from advertising personnel like Archie Lee, who really:

“...wanted to create a fantasy, a vivid portrait of the “real” Santa Claus enjoying Coca-Cola on the job”, Frederick Allen in *Secret Formula* (1994).

The advertising technique behind this successful combination lies in the fact that Santa never tried to force Coca-Cola on anyone, child or parent. Instead, Santa simply enjoyed the soft drink while handing out gifts.

To some extent, the innovation in the widespread use of colour in the print images of popular media (which included not only magazines but also seasonal greetings cards) was significant, and the red-clothed (rather than white, or green) Santa became the definitive one. This was a gesture of powerful but simple branding since such colour-coding became and remains part of the enduring transnational, extra-linguistic, and possibly even subconscious recognition of Coca-Cola brand identity (Mckay, G. 2008).

## 03. Timeline: year by year

### 3.1. The story of how Coca-Cola has shared the gift of Christmas from 1920 to 2020

It is worth developing a remarkable storyline about the evolution of an iconic brand and the company that bears its name, Coca-Cola. Since the first Christmas iconography in 1920 to its very last commercial 100 years later. These unique moments in history, arranged in chronological sequence, have helped to create a global brand that provides memories and remarkable emotions over the years.

Since 1920, The Coca-Cola Company has been bringing the magic of Christmas to life through its marketing. From Haddon Sundblom's Santa to polar bears, Coca-Cola's Christmas ads have enchanted generations for more than a century. The campaigns have evolved with the changing times, reflecting cultural trends and historic events.

As Coca-Cola continues to hold a mirror up to society in 2020, it was decided to ask what have been learnt from times gone by. To tell this special Christmas tale, and unearth some gems from the vaults, the Coca-Cola archive team was asked to take back to where it all began – the Roaring Twenties.

#### The Roaring Twenties: 1920's

The Great War has ended, and the United States became a world power with a new sense of peace and prosperity. Sometimes called *the Jazz Age* or the *Roaring 20s*, the 1920s are known for its new music, new fashions, and its thirst for entertainment (Allen, 1931).

The 20's refers to a period of economic prosperity with a distinctive cultural edge in the United States and Europe. Jazz blossomed, the flapper redefined the modern look for British and American women, and Art Deco peaked. This period saw large-scale development and rapid industrial and economic growth, accelerated consumer demand and new

trends in lifestyle and culture. Additionally, in many major democratic states, women won the right to vote (1920s, n.d.)

The economic prosperity experienced by many countries during the 1920s (especially the United States) was similar to that experienced in the 1950s and 1990s. Each period of prosperity was the result of a paradigm shift in global affairs. These shifts in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1990s, occurred in part as the result of the conclusion of World War I and Spanish flu, World War II, and the Cold War, respectively (1920s, n.d.)

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 ended the era, as the Great Depression brought years of hardship worldwide. The economic boom ended by "Black Tuesday" (October 29, 1929) - the stock market crashed bringing with it the Great Depression. It is worth noting that The Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) opened in Manhattan, November 7th, 1929, nine days after the Wall Street Crash (Allen, 1931).

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1920's**

#### **1920**

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes writes a Supreme Court decision ruling that Coca-Cola is a "single thing, from a single source and well known to the community," recognizing the strength of the Company's trademark.

The Coca-Cola Company moves to its current location on North Avenue in Atlanta.

#### **1921**

The first employee publication, *The Friendly Hand*, begins publication. It is superseded three years later when *The Red Barrel* begins its 40-year run.

The first use of the slogan "*Thirst Knows No Season*" helps transition Coca-Cola from a summer beverage to one enjoyed year-round.

#### **1923**

The introduction of the first six-bottle carton is a significant innovation for the beverage industry. The carton was patented the following year.

Robert W. Woodruff is elected President of The Coca-Cola Company, beginning more than six decades of leadership in the business.

**1925**

The Board of Directors passes a resolution placing the secret formula for Coca-Cola in a bank vault at the Trust Company Bank in Atlanta.

Outdoor billboards are introduced as part of the advertising mix.

**1926**

The Coca-Cola Foreign Department is formed to supply concentrate on overseas bottlers. Some of the countries where bottling operations begin during this decade include Belgium, Bermuda, China, Colombia, Germany, Haiti, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands and Spain.

**1927**

The Company begins sponsoring its first radio program, "Vivian the Coca-Cola Girl."

**1928**

The Company begins its long-term association with the Olympic Games by supplying drinks from kiosks surrounding the venues in Amsterdam.

**1929**

Two significant innovations debut: the bell-shaped Coca-Cola fountain glass and the first standardized open-top cooler.

**Dirty Thirties: 1930's**

This decade was defined by a global economic and political crisis that culminated in the Second World War. It saw the international financial system collapse, beginning with the Wall Street Crash of 1929 with traumatic effects worldwide - leading to widespread unemployment and poverty. (1930s, n.d.)

Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States in November 1932 and introduced the "New Deal", a widespread social welfare strategy to combat the economic and social devastation of the Great Depression. The economic agenda of the "New Deal" was a radical departure from previous laissez-faire economics.

Spanish Civil War broke out on July 17th, 1936. Likewise, Germany and Italy back anti-communist Falange forces of Franco. The war ended in April

1939 with Franco's nationalist forces defeating the republican forces. The dictator became Head of State and President of Government.

During the Great Depression, the art of photography played an important role in the Social Realist art movement. It generally portrayed imagery with socio-political meaning. (1930s, n.d.)

World War II broke out on September 1st, 1939.

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1930's**

#### **1930**

The Coca-Cola Export Corporation is created to market Coca-Cola outside the United States.

The Coca-Cola radio program with Grantland Rice debuts.

#### **1931**

Seeking to create an advertising program that links Coca-Cola with Christmas, artist Haddon Sundblom creates his first illustration showing Santa Claus pausing for a Coke. For the next three decades, from 1931 to 1964, Sundblom paints images of Santa that help to create the modern interpretation of St. Nick.

#### **1932**

*When You Entertain*, a booklet by renowned author Ida Bailey Allen, is offered to consumers for 10 cents. This guide to home entertaining sells almost 400,000 copies in six months.

#### **1933**

The first automated fountain dispenser, the Dole Master, is introduced at the Chicago World's Fair.

#### **1934**

Movie stars Jackie Cooper, Wallace Beery, Maurice Chevalier, Jean Harlow, Maureen O'Sullivan, Johnny Weissmuller and Joan Crawford appear in advertising for Coca-Cola.

#### **1935**

Artist Norman Rockwell creates the 1935 "Out Fishing" calendar. Rockwell also developed artwork for the 1931, 1932 and 1934 calendars.

Lettie Pate Evans joins the Board of Directors of The Coca-Cola Company. She is the first woman to serve on the board of a major corporation, a position she holds until 1953.

### **1936**

The 50th anniversary of Coca-Cola is celebrated. Artist N. C. Wyeth creates the calendar for that year.

### **1938**

Coca-Cola enters Australia, Austria, Norway and South Africa.

### **1939**

Robert Woodruff became Chairman of the Board and served until 1942.

## **The Forties: 1940's**

Most of World War II took place in the first half of the decade, which had a profound effect on most countries and people in Europe. The consequences of the war lingered well into the second half of the decade, with a war-weary Europe divided between the jostling spheres of influence of the Western world and the Soviet Union, leading to the beginning of the Cold War. In December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour bringing the US into the Second World War (1940s, n.d.).

The main combatants were the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) and the Allies (France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China), (Royde-Smith and Hughes, 2020).

During December 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Additionally, in terms of literature it was a decisive decade: *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in 1943; *Anti-Semite and Jew* by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1943; *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank in 1947; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell in 1949.

## **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1940's**

### **1940**

Booklets on flower arranging by Laura Lee Burroughs are distributed to consumers. More than 5 million booklets reach American homes.

**1941**

Travelling laboratories traverse the United States to ensure that quality standards are maintained in the bottling plants.

The first paper cups for Coca-Cola are introduced.

**1942**

The first in a series of posters depicting American fighter planes is issued to be used in schools, restaurants, and retail stores. Additional series were issued in 1943, 1944 and 1945.

The Sprite Boy character is introduced in advertising to convey the message that “Coca-Cola” and “Coke” are two terms which refer to the same product.

During World War II, the Company operated a propellant ammunition loading plant in Talladega, Alabama, called the Brecon Loading Company.

An average of 30 railroad cars of ammunition is produced daily for the U.S. military.

**1943**

The U.S. government requests Coca-Cola to be made available to the troops. Robert Woodruff pledges to provide Coke to the military for a nickel regardless of what it costs the Company to produce the product.

During the war, 64 portable bottling plants were sent to Asia, Europe and North Africa. More than 5 billion bottles of Coca-Cola were distributed.

**1945**

“Coke” becomes a registered trademark of The Coca-Cola Company.

**1946**

The “Yes” poster with artwork by Haddon Sundblom is released. The poster wins multiple design awards.

The first price increase from the 5 cent Coca-Cola occurs in California. The price gradually rises in other markets, ending the decades-old “nickel Coke.”

**1947**

The famous industrial designer Raymond Loewy develops a new fountain dispenser—the Dole Deluxe.

The red disc metal sign is introduced, and a later version of the sign includes the famous contour bottle.

**1948**

Coca-Cola is introduced in Egypt.

A neon spectacular sign is installed in downtown Atlanta at a cost of \$50,000. It remained in the same place until 1981.

**The Post-war Booms: 1950's**

The 1950s were a decade marked by the post-World War II boom, the dawn of the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement. During the 1950s, the United States was the world's strongest military power. Its economy was booming; new cars, suburban houses and other consumer goods were available to more people than ever before. (1950s, n.d.).

By its end, the world had largely recovered from World War II and the Cold War developed from its modest beginning (the late-1940s) to a hot competition between the United States and the Soviet Union by the early-1960s. Moreover, clashes between communism and capitalism dominated the decade. The conflicts included the Korean War in the beginnings of the decade and the beginning of the Space Race with the launch of Sputnik 1. Along with increased testing of nuclear weapons, this created a politically conservative climate (Onion et al. 2010).

According to Onion et al. (2010), the word “boom” describes a lot of things about the 1950s: the booming economy, the booming suburbs and most of all the so-called “baby boom.” This boom began in 1946 when a record number of babies—3.4 million—were born in the United States. About 4 million babies were born each year during the 1950s. In all, by the time the boom finally tapered off in 1964, there were almost 77 million “baby boomers.”

In the 1950s, televisions became something the average family could afford, then by 1950 4.4 million U.S. families had one in their home. Onion et al. (2010) states that the booming prosperity of the 1950s helped to create a widespread sense of stability, contentment, and consensus in the United States. (1950s, n.d.)



## **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1950's**

### **1950**

Coca-Cola becomes the first product to appear on the cover of Time magazine. The magazine wants to have a photo of Robert Woodruff on the cover, but he refuses to state that the product is the only important element in the Company.

The first television commercial for Coca-Cola is broadcast on Thanksgiving Day on a CBS half-hour special featuring Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

### **1951**

The Coca-Cola Company sponsors a weekly radio program featuring the opera tenor Mario Lanza.

### **1953**

"Coke Time," starring popular singer Eddie Fisher, debuts on both radio and television. Fisher's program is so popular that the Company issues promotional records with his songs. The program aired until 1957.

### **1955**

The Coca-Cola Company began featuring African-Americans in marketing with the Harlem Globetrotters in 1951 and Olympic Games athletes Jesse Owens and Alice Coachman in 1953. Clark University student Mary Alexander became one of the first African-American women to appear in print advertising when she was featured in 1955.

The first king-size bottles make their appearance in the United States.

Fanta Orange is introduced in Naples, Italy, the first new product to be distributed by the Company. The Fanta line of flavoured beverages comes to the United States in 1960.

### **1956**

McCann-Erickson, Inc., replaces the D'Arcy Advertising Company as the official advertising agency for the Company. D'Arcy held the account for 50 years, dating back to 1906.

**1957**

A special cup vending machine is installed aboard the atomic-powered submarine Nautilus. The vending equipment had to be specially designed to fit through the vessel's hatch.

Sales outside the United States account for about 33% of revenue.

**1958**

The Coca-Cola Company sponsors a pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair. The pavilion houses an operating bottling plant and includes an exhibit that documents the Coca-Cola business around the globe.

**1959**

Coca-Cola is now distributed by a network of 1,700 bottlers, operating in more than 100 countries.

**The Cultural Decade: 1960's**

The Sixties, dominated by the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Protests, also saw the assassinations of US President John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Cuban Missile Crisis, and finally ended on a good note when the first man landed on the moon (1960s, n.d.).

The term "the Sixties" is used by historians, journalists, and other academics in scholarship and popular culture to denote the complex inter-related cultural and political trends around the globe during this era. Some use the term to describe the decade's counterculture and revolution in social norms about clothing, music, drugs, dress, sexuality, formalities, and schooling; others use it to denounce the decade as one of irresponsible excess, flamboyance, and decay of social order.

The decade was also labelled the Swinging Sixties because of the fall or relaxation of social taboos that occurred during this time, but also because of the emergence of a wide range of music - from a folk music revival to the Beatles revolution. Additionally, the heavy-handed American role in the Vietnam War outraged student protests around the globe. (1960s, n.d.)

As per Spector, R., (2020), the Vietnam War (1955–1975) would eventually lead to a commitment of over half a million American troops, resulting in over 58,500 American deaths and producing a large-scale anti-war movement in the United States. As late as the end of 1965, few Americans protested the American involvement in Vietnam, but as the war dragged on and the body count continued to climb, civil unrest escalated. Students

became a powerful and disruptive force, and university campuses sparked a national debate over the war. As the movement's ideals spread beyond college campuses, doubts about the war also began to appear within the administration itself. A mass movement began rising in opposition to the Vietnam War, ending in the massive Moratorium protests in 1969, as well as the movement of resistance to conscription for the war.

In the second half of the decade, young people began to revolt against the conservative norms of the time, as well as remove themselves from mainstream liberalism, the high level of materialism which was so common during the era. This created a "counterculture" and that sparked a social revolution. (1960s, n.d.).

It began in the United States as a reaction against the conservatism and social conformity of the 1950s. The youth involved in the popular social aspects of the movement became known as hippies. These groups created a movement towards liberation in society - including the sexual revolution and demanding more freedoms and rights for women and minorities.

To conclude this decade, in 1969 took place The Woodstock Festival, and four months later, the Altamont Free Concert.

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1960's**

#### **1960**

Steel 330ml cans were introduced to make Coca-Cola more portable.

The Coca-Cola Company acquires The Minute Maid Corporation, adding a line of juice products to its portfolio.

Coca-Cola sponsors a nationwide competition for high school singers and musicians called Talentsville USA. The winner is a lyric soprano from Carrier Mills, Illinois, who goes on to have a successful career in opera.

#### **1961**

The first feature-length motion picture to feature Coca-Cola premieres. Billy Wilder's comedy "One, Two, Three" stars Jimmy Cagney as the manager of a Coca-Cola bottling plant in West Berlin during the Cold War.

The Company celebrates its 75th anniversary. A national bottler convention in Miami attracts more than 4,000 attendees, mostly U.S. bottlers.

Sprite, a lemon-lime beverage, is introduced on February 1st.

### **1963**

TaB, the first diet drink produced by the Company, is launched. Its name is selected from a computer-generated search that yields more than 300,000 options.

The “Things Go Better with Coke” advertising campaign begins. On the radio, pop singers like The Supremes, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Jan and Dean, Roy Orbison and The Coasters use their unique musical styles to swing the jingle. On television, celebrities like football star Joe Namath, designer Anne Klein, golfer Arnold Palmer and jazz vocalist Barbara McNair endorse Coca-Cola.

### **1964**

At the New York World’s Fair, The Coca-Cola Company pavilion houses an exhibit called Global Holiday that takes visitors to six exotic locales. The pavilion also houses the world’s largest carillon.

### **1965**

The Coca-Cola Company and its bottlers sponsor the first animated television special for the cartoon strip Peanuts, “A Charlie Brown Christmas.”

### **1966**

Fresca, a citrus-flavoured sugar-free soft drink, makes its debut.

### **1968**

Bottling begins in Hungary, the Somali Republic and Yugoslavia.

A one-way, or non-returnable, contour bottle is introduced.

### **1969**

A new graphic look for the Coca-Cola system is introduced, featuring a red-and-white colour scheme and logo.

The launch of the new slogan “It’s the Real Thing” ushered in a new advertising look for brand Coke.

## **'Me' decade: 1970's**

Historians have increasingly portrayed the 1970s as a "pivot of change" in world history, focusing especially on the economic upheavals that followed the end of the post-war economic boom. Through the years, social progressive values that began in the 1960s, such as increasing political awareness and economic liberty of women, continued to grow. In the United Kingdom, the 1979 election resulted in the victory of its Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, the first female British Prime Minister (1970's, n.d.).

Novelist Tom Wolfe coined the term "'Me' decade" in his essay "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening", published by New York Magazine in August 1976 referring to the 1970s. The term describes a general new attitude of Americans towards atomized individualism and away from communitarianism, in clear contrast with the 1960s (1970's, n.d.).

HBO was launched in November 1972, becoming the nation's first pay-television channel. Then, in 1975 Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded the Microsoft corporation - the Altair became the first widely available personal computer running Microsoft's software.

## **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1970's**

### **1970**

The Dynamic Ribbon Device, the red-and-white graphic representing two adjacent contour bottles, is launched nationwide.

Coca-Cola introduces its first sports drink when Olympade is test marketed in the United States. The packaging features a logo for the U.S. Olympic Committee.

### **1971**

First introduced as a radio ad and later produced as a television commercial, "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke" becomes an international hit and remains one of the most popular ads for Coca-Cola. According to the precedent social context, this advertising can be considered highly inspired by The Woodstock Festival.

### **1972**

The first bottling operations opened in Poland.

**1975**

Georgia Coffee is introduced in Japan.

The Coca-Cola Collectors Club is established with 27 members. Club membership now is nearly 4,000.

**1976**

The Coca-Cola Company and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) agree to the first-ever sponsorship between a company and an international sport governing body.

**1977**

The Christmas “Candles” commercial debuts.

**1978**

Coca-Cola signs an agreement to re-enter the China market after a nearly 30-years absence.

Hi-C soft drinks are introduced.

The 2-litre PET bottle is introduced, beginning the Company’s use of PET packaging.

**1979**

Mello Yello is introduced. The North Avenue Tower headquarters building in Atlanta was first occupied.

The “Mean” by Joe Greene television commercial debuts. The ad is consistently voted one of the best commercials of all time.

Coca-Cola begins worldwide sponsorship of Special Olympics.

**Rise of the New Right: 1980’s**

The decade was notable for socioeconomic changes due to technology advances and industry relocation of multinational corporations in underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, Japan and West Germany experienced large economic growth during this decade. The AIDS epidemic became recognized in the 1980s and has since killed an estimated 39 million people (as of 2013). Global warming became well known to the scientific and political community in the 1980s. (1980s, n.d.).

Developing countries across the world faced economic and social difficulties as they suffered from multiple debt crises in the 1980s,

requiring many of these countries to apply for financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is considered one of the momentous events of the 1980s. At the end of the decade, signalled a seismic geopolitical shift that would be followed in 1990 by the German reunification (1980s, n.d.).

For many people, the symbol of the decade was the "yuppie": a baby boomer with a college education, a well-paying job and expensive taste. However, in some ways, yuppiedom was less shallow than it appeared, as per Onion et al. (2018).

At the movie theatre, the 1980s was the age of the blockbuster. Movies like "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial," "Return of the Jedi," ... appealed to moviegoers of all ages and made hundreds of millions of dollars at the box office. At home, people watched family sitcoms and rented movies to watch on their new VCRs. The most revolutionary cable network of all was MTV. The music videos the network played made stars like Duran Duran and Michael Jackson. MTV also influenced fashion: people across the country (and around the world) did their best to copy the hairstyles and fashions they saw in music videos. In this way, artists like Madonna became (and remains) fashion icons, as mentioned in the 1980s by Onion et al. (2018).

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1980's**

#### **1980**

A Coca-Cola contour bottle becomes the central focus of the movie "The Gods Must Be Crazy", by Jamie Uys.

#### **1981**

Roberto Gouizeta becomes Chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Company.

The first bottling plant opens in China. By 2010, the Company had opened more than 40 bottling plants in the country.

#### **1982**

Diet Coke is introduced in a celebrity-filled ceremony in New York, becoming the first extension of the trademarks Coca-Cola and Coke.

The Coca-Cola Company purchases Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. While the Company owns the movie studio, “Gandhi” wins an Academy Award for best picture.

### **1983**

The Coca-Cola Company continues a long association with The Walt Disney Company as the anchor sponsor of Tokyo Disneyland. The two companies signed a worldwide marketing agreement in 1985.

### **1985**

Bottling operations begin in Russia.

The formula for Coca-Cola was changed for the first time in 99 years. The product, popularly dubbed “New Coke,” generated consumer protest nationwide. Product made with the original formula, renamed “Coca-Cola Classic,” returned to the market 79 days later.

Coca-Cola became the first soft drink consumed in space when the astronauts aboard the space shuttle Challenger tested the space can on a mission.

### **1986**

May 8th – Coca-Cola marks its hundredth anniversary with a worldwide celebration in Atlanta.

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation is created as a joint program between the Company and The Coca-Cola Bottlers’ Association.

Company-owned bottlers and several independent bottler groups combine to form Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) as an independent bottler and publicly traded company.

### **1989**

The first neon spectacular sign in the Soviet Union debuts in Moscow’s Pushkin Square.

## **Multiculturalism: 1990’s**

Culturally, the 1990s are characterized by the rise of multiculturalism and alternative media, which continued into the 2000s and 2010s. Movements such as grunge, the rave scene and hip hop spread around the world to young people during that decade, aided by then-new technology: the World Wide Web (1990s, n.d.).



A combination of factors was going on during the 90's - the continued mass mobilization of capital, the end of the decades-long Cold War, the beginning of the widespread Internet, scepticism towards the government, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and reconsolidation of economic and political power across the world and within countries. The 1990s saw extreme advances in technology, with the World Wide Web and portable video games consoles (Nintendo 64, Game Boy Color...) - Super Mario World was the decade's best-selling console video game.

Continuing social liberalization was happening in most countries through the 1990s. Youth culture responded to this by embracing environmentalism and entrepreneurship. Western world fashions reflected the decade by highly individualistic and/or counter-cultural: tattoos and piercings. "Retro" styles inspired by fashions of the 1960s and 1970s were also prevalent.

By that time, the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of diseases - increasing acceptance of homosexuality and promoting the third-wave feminism.

About audio-visuals, the animated films began to gain popularity during the decade. In 1994, DreamWorks SKG was founded and produced its first two animated films: The Prince of Egypt and Antz which were both aimed and commercially successful. At this time, Titanic became a cultural phenomenon throughout the world and eventually became the highest-grossing film of all time. Then, live-action films featuring computer-animated characters became popular with films such as Casper, 101 Dalmatians, Men in Black.

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 1990's**

#### **1990**

As the Berlin Wall comes down, Coca-Cola is sold in East Germany for the first time.

The World of Coca-Cola museum opens at Underground Atlanta, greeting an average of 1 million guests a year until 2007.

#### **1992**

Powerade is introduced and is designated as the official sports drink of the Olympic Games.

#### **1993**

The popular Coca-Cola polar bears are introduced in the commercial "Northern Lights."

The 500ml contour PET bottle is introduced.

**1994**

The first bottling operations opened in Vietnam.

**1995**

The Coca-Cola Company acquires Barq's root beer brand.

**1996**

The Centennial Olympic Games are held in Atlanta. The Coca-Cola Company creates Coca-Cola Olympic City to entertain fans.

A contour bottle folk-art exhibition is created with more than 50 bottles from around the world displayed in Atlanta during the Olympic Games.

**1998**

The Coca-Cola Company announces a 100-year partnership with the National Basketball Association.

**1999**

The Coca-Cola Company acquires Peruvian soft drink Inca Kola and Schweppes beverages in many markets around the world.

**The new millennium: 2000's**

This decade was defined by crucial and violent events. The War on Terror and War in Afghanistan began after the September 11th attacks in 2001. Right after, in 2002, the International Criminal Court was formed. In 2003, the United States invaded Iraq leading to the end of Saddam Hussein. In fact, Al-Qaeda and affiliated Islamist militant groups performed terrorist acts throughout the decade – 2004 Madrid train bombings, 7/7 London attack in 2005... (2000s, n.d.)

Climate change and global warming became common concerns in the 2000s. The global temperature kept climbing during the decade. In December 2009, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that the 2000s may have been the warmest decade since records began in 1850.

A common currency for most EU member states, the euro €, was put into circulation in 2002 and the old currencies were phased out. Additionally, a study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research at

United Nations University reports that the richest 1% of adults alone owned 40% of global assets in the year 2000. The economic developments were dominated by a worldwide economic downturn, which started with the crisis in the United States in late 2007 and led to the bankruptcy of major banks and other financial institutions. The outbreak of this global financial crisis sparked a global recession, beginning in the United States and affecting most of the industrialized world (2000s, n.d.).

In the 2000s, the Internet became a mainstay and became increasingly available in the developing world. Its growth contributed to globalization during the decade, allowing faster communications among people around the world; social networking sites arose as a new way for people to stay in touch no matter where they are, as long as they have an internet connection. First social networking sites were Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter. News blogs grew in readership and popularity; cable news and other online media outlets became competitive in attracting advertising revenues and capable journalists while writers were joining online organizations.

Usage of computer-generated imagery (CGI) became widespread in films during the 2000s, especially with the success of 2001's Shrek. Online films became popular, and conversion to digital cinema started. By the way, American television in the 2000s saw the sharp increase in popularity of television – the decade has seen a steady decline in the number of sitcoms and an increase of shows, crime, and medical dramas.

### **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 2000's**

#### **2000**

The Coca-Cola Company sponsors the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

#### **2001**

The Coca-Cola Company and Nestlé create a new company, Beverage Partners Worldwide, to market ready-to-serve coffee and tea beverages.

The Coca-Cola Company joins the fight against AIDS in Africa with the joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS.

Coca-Cola France sponsors the Tour de France for the 15th consecutive year.

The Coca-Cola Foundation and Coca-Cola bottlers contribute \$12 million in disaster relief following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The Fridge Pack, a 12-pack carton designed to fit conveniently in the refrigerator, is introduced in the United States.

The Coca-Cola Company acquires Odwalla Inc., a producer of premium refrigerated fruit beverages.

The Coca-Cola Company and NASCAR sign a multiyear sponsorship extension.

## **2002**

Vanilla Coke is introduced in the United States.

The Coca-Cola Company sponsors the FIFA World Cup™ competition in Japan and Korea.

“American Idol,” a singing competition sponsored by Coca-Cola, debuts. It becomes one of the most popular shows in the history of television.

## **2004**

Diet Coke with Lime is introduced.

Continuing a presence that dates back to 1920, a 3D, high-tech, six-story sign lights up Times Square in New York City.

## **2005**

A steel contour bottle is introduced for use in nightclubs and at special events.

Coca-Cola Zero, a zero-calorie cola, makes its debut.

## **2006**

The Bottling Investments Group is established. This organization manages the operations of Company-owned bottling plants around the world.

## **2007**

The new World of Coca-Cola opens at Pemberton Place in Atlanta.

The Coca-Cola Company acquired Energy Brands Inc. (glacéau), maker of Vitaminwater and Smartwater.

## **2008**

Sponsorship of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games connects with more than 500 million consumers in China.

A Coca-Cola Facebook page is established by two fans. The site has over 22 million fans worldwide as of January 2011 and continues to grow.

Sprite became the third Company product to sell more than 2 billion cases annually, joining Coca-Cola and Diet Coke/Coca-Cola light.

## **2009**

Coca-Cola Freestyle, an innovative fountain dispenser that allows consumers to select from more than 100 beverages, is unveiled. Two-liter contour packaging is introduced.

Plant-Bottle PET packaging is introduced. Made partially from plant-based materials: Plant-Bottle plastic bottles are completely recyclable.

Simply becomes a billion-dollar brand.

## **Achievements and tragedies: 2010's**

The decade began amid the chaotic wake of a global financial crisis and ended with the impeachment of U.S. President Donald Trump. The growing use of social media-fuelled mass protest movements, bringing millions of people together around the globe in pursuit of common objectives. Great Britain saw a new generation of royals emerge, countries around the world passed laws legalizing same-sex marriage and a U.S. president was impeached by the House of Representatives – according to Pruitt, S. (2019)

In September 2011, around 1,000 people marched through the streets of New York City's Financial District under an "Occupy Wall Street" banner. The protesters condemned income inequality and the influence of money in politics. In 2013, three black female activists started using the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who shot and killed an unarmed black teen, Trayvon Martin, earlier in February 2012. The Black Lives Matter movement drew international attention during the global George Floyd protests in 2020. An estimated 15 million to 26 million people participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, making Black Lives Matter one of the largest movements in history. A June 2020 Pew Research Center

poll found that the majority of Americans, across all racial and ethnic groups, have expressed support for the Black Lives Matter movement (2010s, n.d.).

The United States continued to retain its global superpower status while China, along with launching vast economic initiatives and military reforms, sought to expand its influence and solidify its position as a potential superpower. Meanwhile, a global populist wave in the USA and Europe brought Donald Trump into the White House and Brexit. The European Union experienced a migrant crisis in the middle of the decade and the historic United Kingdom EU membership referendum followed by withdrawal negotiations during its later years. Russia attempted to assert itself in international affairs annexing Crimea in 2014.

The decade saw key advances for LGBTQ people around the world, with the legalization of same-sex marriage in 18 countries, including Argentina, France, Great Britain, Australia, Ireland, Germany and the United States.

The 2006 coined #MeToo movement exploded in late 2017 after a New York Times article about accusations of sexual harassment and assault against influential Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein made by dozens of women, including many famous actresses. In the aftermath of these revelations, millions of people came forward to express solidarity with the accusers and shared their own experiences with sexual assault, harassment, and sexism in the workplace and beyond.

Information technology progressed, with smartphones becoming widespread. The Internet of things saw substantial growth during the 2010s due to advancements in wireless networking devices, mobiles, and cloud computing. Advancements in data processing and the rollout of 4G broadband allowed data and information to disperse among online domains. In the meantime, social media facilitated phenomena such as the Me Too movement and the rise of slacktivism and online call-out culture. At the same time, globalism and an increased demand for variety and personalization in the face of video and music streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Spotify.

## **Time of changes: 2020**

This new decade started with the European Council confirming that Britain was no longer a member of the European Union. Then, the United Nations declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health, as well as, Year of the Nurse and Midwife by the World Health Organization.

2020 has been heavily defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to global social and economic disruption, mass cancellations and postponements of events, worldwide lockdowns, and the largest economic recession since the Great Depression.

## **Key milestones at The Coca-Cola Company: 2010's**

### **2010**

In the aftermath of a devastating earthquake, The Coca-Cola Company launches the Haiti Hope Project, a public-private initiative that aims to develop a sustainable mango industry in Haiti.

The Coca-Cola Company acquires the entire North American bottling operations of Coca-Cola Enterprises.

### **2011**

The Coca-Cola Company celebrates 125 years of brand Coca-Cola.

### **2012**

Coca-Cola Launches Global Ads for London 2012 Olympic Games: Coca-Cola Move to the Beat. In the summer of 2011, Coca-Cola lifted the lid on the creative process for the first time, inviting teens to attend a free festival-style gig featuring GRAMMY award-winning producer Mark Ronson and Mercury Music Prize Nominee Katy B.

Launched the world-renowned ad “Give a little bit” or Coca-Cola Security Camera. This ad shows acts of kindness and courage on real footage taken by security cameras around the world. This positive, smile-provoking commercial showed people doing nice things for each others. Anti-crimes such as stealing kisses, addiction to music, and crazy heroic actions, are covered by Supertramp’s hit Give a Little Bit.

Spotify and Coca-Cola partner to share music with the world.

New Partnership with JBF Industries Ltd. to further expand Global Production of Plastic Packaging Made from Plants.

## **2013**

Taylor Swift and Rebecca Minkoff Partner with Diet Coke to Find the Next Great Fashion Designer.

Coca-Cola Releases 2012-2013 Global Sustainability Report focused on the global empowerment of women; the management of the world's precious water resources; and the well-being of the world's growing population.

ZICO™ Beverages Joins the Coca-Cola Family

## **2014**

The Coca-Cola Company and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc. enter a Long-Term Global Strategic Partnership. Both companies have signed a 10-year agreement to collaborate on the development and introduction of The Coca-Cola Company's global brand portfolio for use in GMCR's forthcoming Keurig Cold™ at-home beverage system.

The Coca-Cola Company Statement on the 2014 Equity Plan based on minimal Actual Dilution, No Changes on Pay Practices and Equity Compensation is Performance-Based.

Coca-Cola's summer campaign extends an invitation to America to 'Share a Coke.' For the first time in the U.S., Coca-Cola is personalizing the sharing experience by swapping out some of its iconic logos on 20-ounce bottles for 250 of the nation's most popular names among teens and Millennials.

## **2015**

Coca-Cola Expands Capacity in the Fast-Growing Indonesian Market with Opening of Two Production Lines. This marks the first of several major investments being made as the Coca-Cola system in Indonesia invests \$500 million to accelerate growth in the next three to four years.

James Quincey is named President and Chief Operating Officer: Appoints Veteran Executive to Oversee Global Operations. Ahmet Bozer, Executive Vice President and President of Coca-Cola International, to Retire after Distinguished 25-Year Career. Introducing Smartwater sparkling.



## **2016**

Coca-Cola announces "One Brand" Global Marketing Approach. Taste the Feeling: Drinking a Coca-Cola, any Coca-Cola, makes the moment special.

Coca-Cola Goes for Gold in Rio 2016 Olympic Games with Global #ThatsGold campaign. In the 88th year of this special partnership, Coca-Cola will celebrate with fans across the world the gold feeling that comes from accomplishing something great, however simple, in an everyday moment.

Marvel's Ant-Man and The Incredible Hulk Clash for the First Time in an Epic Battle for Coca-Cola's Mini Can.

Helen Price Named Vice President of Global Community Affairs for The Coca-Cola Company and President of The Coca-Cola Foundation

Coca-Cola Reveals New "One-Brand" Packaging – this global marketing strategy announced the launch of new graphics that use one visual identity system featuring Coca-Cola Red as a unifying colour across the Trademark.

## **2017**

The Coca-Cola System finalized the acquisition of AdeS from Unilever. The plant-based beverage acquisition is the latest progress in ongoing efforts to expand their portfolio of high-quality, great-tasting, and functional beverages for consumers.

Coca-Cola No Sugar, in some markets called Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, is a new recipe being introduced around the world. It has an improved taste that is even closer to the great taste of Coca-Cola but without the sugar. Coca-Cola No Sugar was first introduced in 2016 and continues to roll out in additional markets in 2017.

New Coca-Cola Sustainability Report Uses Infographics to Highlight Continued Progress Toward 2020 Sustainability Company Goals.

## **2018**

Diet Coke was relaunched with a full brand restage in North America: a new image for an old favourite.

It is announced the New Global Vision to Help Create a World Without Waste. The company reshaped its approach to packaging, with a global goal to help collect and recycle the equivalent of 100% of its packaging by 2030.

Launched 'A Coke for Everyone' with the debut of the New Ad Campaign during Big Game. Coca-Cola returns to America's biggest advertising stage for the 12th consecutive year with the national broadcast debut of a new 60-second spot titled, "The Wonder of Us."

Lighter bottle, longer use - Improving product delivery and environmental impact. "Affordable Small Sparkling Package", a 250-millilitre plastic bottle that maintains aesthetic appeal and product quality protections helping the company to reduce its carbon footprint.

The Coca-Cola Company acquired Costa, which was founded in London in 1971 and has grown to become a major coffee brand across the world.

## **2019**

Sprite launched a fan-generated Spotify playlist and Podcast highlighting unsigned artists. The brand rebooted its Spotify channel and repopulated it with a diverse array of fan-tapped acts with minimal social media followings.

Coca-Cola Energy started in Europe as an energizing innovation.

Iconic Brand Legacy: the company reclaims title as a most effective brand marketer in Effie Index - Unlike programs like Cannes Lions, which recognize advertising solely based on creativity, Effies reward campaigns that drive core metrics like purchase intent and sales.

Through the first partnership between Coca-Cola and Netflix's Stranger Things, it was released with a limited promotional number of New Coke cans (1985).

## **2020**

The company thinks about disruptive innovation to anticipate tomorrow's tastes. A team of technical experts helping Coca-Cola North America launch breakthrough beverages in emerging categories - from kombucha to cultured ciders, keto-friendly smoothies, and cold-brew coffees - in record time.

Sprite Ginger launched his new flavoured beverage and streetwear collaboration.

Due to COVID-19 Coca-Cola pauses advertising on all media platforms globally. On digital media, Facebook and Instagram paid ads were paused too and cut the spending by a third for the rest of the year.

Coca-Cola comes out of advertising-lockdown with 'manifesto for change' commercial written by George "The Poet". The new global campaign launched 1st of August, encourages people to be 'Open, Like Never Before' in a world forever changed by the global pandemic.

Coca-Cola is built for the long-term. The Company – which turns 134 in 2020 – has seen many difficult chapters and it has always emerged stronger.

The Company continues to invest in its core sustainability priorities, for this reason in 2020 it transitions into 100% recycled plastic packaging (rPET) in the Netherlands and Norway. Additionally, Coca-Cola is partnering with Danish startup Paboco to develop a 100% paper bottle in the pursuit of creating a paper bottle that can be recycled like any other type of paper.

## **04. Communication Brief 2021**

### **4.1. Coca-Cola as the everlasting icon of contemporary Christmas**

This section is confidential and has been excluded from the present document.

For greater certainty, I acknowledge that my supervisor(s) conducted a final review upon completion of this thesis to define any specific confidential information relative to the company's strategy for 2021.

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*This Undergraduate Thesis  
was finished on the beautiful day of November 29th, 2020  
A day full of wishes and insightful grays*





